

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF ROMANS 13 : 1—7 AND ITS
IMPLICATION FOR CHURCH — STATE RELATIONS IN
SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA.

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BY

ZACCHAEUS ADEKUNLE ADENIJI
B.A (Hons) Ife; N.C.E; Dip. Th; Dip. Rs.

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ABSTRACT

This study carried out an exegetical study of Romans 13: 1-7 and examined the biblical basis of Church-State relationship. It discussed the Church-State relationship in Southwestern Nigeria and explored the thorny issues of the role of the Church in a corrupt and oppressive State.

The methodology adopted in this work-included exegesis of the relevant text, in trying to discover what the text meant to the original recipients. A theological enquiry was made to understand its message to the Church. The contextualization examined the Church and State relationship in Southwestern Nigeria in the light of the passage. Some randomly selected Church and State dignitaries were interviewed. Relevant literature in the form of books, journals, magazines and Church bulletins were consulted.

This study found out that the Church in Southwestern Nigeria had tried to live up to expectation in the areas of education and healthcare delivery but had more work to do in the area of politics and economy. It is also noted that although the opinions of major scholars and exegetes on the pericope tend to support the submission of Apostle Paul on the Christians' civil duties to the State, opportunist' interpretation must be rejected. Both religious and political leaders in Southwestern Nigeria had used passages like this to advocate uncritical submission to tyranny and oppression just as Westerners used Paul's views about slaves to justify slavery and slave trade. When civil authorities decided to act contrary then disobedience would become a duty and the Church must do a re-reading of the Pauline idea in Romans 13: 1-7 in accordance with

modern realities. As such, if they went against the perceived Will of God, the Church was duty-bound to call them to order through constructive criticism, dialogue and, if need be, outright disobedience.

The study concluded that Pauline idea of Church-State relationship tended to be a veritable tool for oppression and bad governance. The Church had a vital role to play in the art of governance by encouraging obedience to civil authorities while ensuring that civil authorities rule in the fear of God. Paul's idea of Church-State relation was not fully implemented in Southwestern Nigeria.